



Amalgamated Transit Union

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Office of the International President

October 15, 2018

James P. Redeker
Commissioner
Connecticut Department of Transportation
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Dear Commissioner Redeker,

I write today to ask for your support of Amalgamated Transit Union members in Connecticut as they seek to have a basic human right—the right to safe, clean, and accessible restrooms on the job—honored by their employers. Specifically, we request that you meet as soon as possible with ATU Connecticut State Council leadership to discuss this pressing issue.

From CT Transit, SEAT, GBTA, HART, Milford Transit, and other transit systems across the state, we've received dozens of horror stories from bus operators who are forced to risk their health, safety, and jobs just to use the bathroom at work. Here are just a couple of excerpts from those stories:

“The supervisors sometimes stand outside the bathroom on long routes to see when the operator is coming [to] use the bathroom. The reason for this is because they try to intimidate the operator so they will leave on time.”

“I can't sleep when I am dehydrated. I become dehydrated, because I am either too busy to drink or afraid of needing the restroom. I have to purchase some things to use restroom...”

“We need bathroom breaks. It [causes] us stress, medical issues, embarrassment, discomfort... anxiety. Please help us.”

These bus operators are not alone. The ATU Connecticut State Council recently surveyed our members to get a deeper understanding of the extent of the problem. More than 400 bus operators responded. The results, while not surprising, are deeply disturbing:

- On average, 60% of operators reported having no clean, accessible, well-equipped, or secure restrooms at the end of or along their routes.
- 80% of operators report that there is not enough time built into their schedules to allow for a restroom break.
- 82% of bus operators say they try to “hold it in” to cope with a lack of access.
- 68% of operators say they avoid eating and drinking altogether to cope with a lack of access.
- More than 30% of operators report using trees, bushes, cups, or bottles to relieve themselves.
- 26% of operators report having soiled themselves on duty because they lacked restroom access.
- 37% report having urinary tract or bladder infections.
- 16% report having been warned, disciplined, or retaliated against for requesting to use a bathroom.

As the operators note in their stories, while most put their health and safety at risk by coping, those that insist on using the restroom are often met with intimidation and threats of discipline. While the simple fact that restroom access is a human right should be enough motivation to address this hostile atmosphere, it's worth noting that a lack of restroom access for bus operators also poses a danger to passengers.

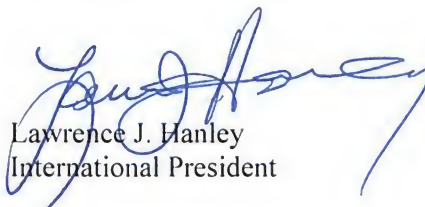
A 2011 study published in *Neurology and Urodynamics* found that an extreme urge to void one's bladder has cognitive effect comparable to being awake for 24 hours or having a blood alcohol level of 0.05%. In other words, when a bus operator holds it in, as more than 82% reported doing in our survey, their ability to safely operate a vehicle is severely impacted.

This month, ATU Local Unions across Connecticut are submitting a proposal to their employers that, if agreed to, would allow our members to enjoy this basic human right to which they are entitled. The proposal asks employers to commit to:

- Timely access to safe and clean restrooms on an as-needed basis on all routes
- Adequate recovery time at the end of the line
- No discipline or adverse impact for employees having to use a restroom
- Joint union/management implementation and oversight of bathroom access measures

It is our hope that you will support this good faith effort by ATU members to restore dignity on the job and safety on our streets. We look forward to meeting with you in person to review these results and discuss our proposal in more detail.

Respectfully,



Lawrence J. Hanley
International President

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